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ABSTRACT

The model for the reading and study skills center at the University of Montana is based on the individualized and classroom techniques that have been successful with university students. The center offers two courses: increasing reading effectiveness and improving reading and study skills. The first is designed to improve reading achievement, while the second is designed to improve both reading achievement and study skills. Placement and evaluation of students in both courses are determined by administration of the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, and the test results determine the readability level of the materials assigned to each student. After pretesting, all students attend a reading lab orientation at the center, where each receives a folder for test scores, progress records, student work, and evaluations. Students enrolled in the reading effectiveness class must log the required amount of lab hours per quarter and take the Nelson-Denny as a posttest to determine a pass/no pass grade. Students enrolled in the reading and study skills course receive a letter grade based on a point system. (HTH)

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University of Montana Reading and Study Skills Center: A Descriptive Model

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Abstract

A descriptive model of a university reading and study skills center is presented. Information is provided regarding two courses offered, Increasing Reading Effectiveness and Improving Reading and Study Skills; testing procedures and materials; reading lab procedure and record keeping; and evaluation procedures.

This model is designed to provide descriptive information for instructors who are interested in developing and managing a reading and study skills center patterned after the model facility. Information is provided concerning course descriptions, testing, record keeping, and evaluation procedures. The model provides an operational orientation based on the individualized and classroom techniques that have demonstrated to be successful with university students.

Description of Courses

The Reading and Study Skills Center offers two courses designed to improve reading and study skills: Increasing Reading Effectiveness, Education 002, and Improving Reading and Study Skills, Education 199.

Increasing Reading Effectiveness

This course is designed to accommodate a wide range of student reading needs via a trilevel curriculum approach utilizing reading and study skills materials, perception training equipment, and study skills seminars. The undergraduate course is offered for one or two registration credits. A student must log twenty lab hours per quarter credit and take pretest/posttest exams to determine a Pass/No Pass grade.

Reading and Study Skills Materials

The reading and study skills materials include The Now Student (Spargo, 1977), The Optimum Reading Achievement Program (Powers, 1967), The Purdue Reading Series (Schmidt, 1970), and Reading Power (Brown, 1983).

The Now Student is an instructional text containing twenty-five lessons dealing with a particular reading or study skill and presents specific techniques for development. The design and organization are consistent from lesson to lesson so that a student becomes comfortable with the text format. Cloze comprehension tests follow each lesson providing assessment of student understanding. Lessons include the following topics: how to study, training your memory, learning to concentrate, listening effectively, how to take notes, reviewing for exams, etc.

The Optimum Reading Achievement Program (ORA) is designed to improve reading comprehension and reading rate. Three readability levels, ranging from grade seven through adult, contain twenty filmed essays. Each essay is edited into various fixations and essay books present the printed text of each film, including vocabulary and comprehension questions.

The Purdue Reading Series emphasizes reading efficiency and post-reading discussion skills. Like ORA, films are edited into various fixations and essay

books contain the complete text of each film story accompanied by vocabulary and comprehension exercises. Readability levels range from junior high school through college.

Reading Power combines attention to efficient reading with how-to-study suggestions. Fourteen instructional chapters are followed by two selections. Each selection includes a vocabulary and comprehension test. Application exercises follow each instructional selection, moving the reader from theory into practice.

Perception Learning Equipment

The perception learning equipment includes the Tachomatic x500. This projector is designed to increase the use of peripheral vision in the reading process, increase the speed of ocular movements, develop skimming and scanning abilities, and eliminate decelerations due to excessive subvocalization and regressions. The above is accomplished by projecting edited reading films on an illuminated reading line. Students are trained to read in thought units rather than word-by-word reading.

Study Skills Seminars

Optional weekly study skills seminars constitute the final course component of Increasing Reading Effectiveness. Topics covered include the following:

1. Time management. Organizing and managing study, personal, recreational, and social time.

2. Lecture note-taking. Developing and improving note-taking skills using the Cornell System format.

3. Textbook mastery. Implementing SQ3R to read and retain text content.

4. Concentration and memory. Developing and improving short and long-term memory.

5. Test-taking strategies. Preparing for and taking exams, including test wiseness and test anxiety.

The seminars are presented by the instructor providing both information to the students and interaction between students and instructor.

Improving Reading and Study Skills

This course is designed to improve study habits and the skills of reading, efficient note-taking, test-taking, and critical thinking. The undergraduate course is offered every quarter for two graduation credits. A student must attend two lectures per week plus log one lab hour per week in the Reading and Study Skills Center working on his individualized reading program.

While the major objective of Increasing Reading Effectiveness is improvement of reading achievement, Improving Reading and Study Skills is designed to meet two objectives: improvement of reading achievement and

improvement of study skills. Reading and study materials are similar with the addition of How to Study in College (Pauk, 1984). Attendance at lectures is required; homework, midterm, and final exams are also given.

Testing Procedures and Materials

Placement and evaluation of students in both courses are determined by administering the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, Forms C and D. This test is normed for students in grades nine through sixteen (seniors in college). It is a standardized test and self-scored for our purposes. The test consists of a vocabulary inventory (100 items, ten minutes) and a comprehension section (eight readings and thirty-six questions, twenty minutes). The first minute of the comprehension test is a rate check which is assessed in words per minute (WPM). The test yields four scores: vocabulary, comprehension, total reading, and rate. The raw scores can be converted to percentiles and grade level equivalent scores (GLE).

The test results determine the readability level of the materials assigned to each student:

1. If tested GLE is 6.0-8.9, level I of ORA or Purdue is assigned.

2. If tested GLE is 9.0-10.9, level II of ORA or Purdue is assigned.

3. If tested GLE is 11.0-12.9+, level III of ORA or Purdue and Reading Power are assigned.

4. All students in Increasing Reading Effectiveness are assigned The Now Student.

Reading Lab Procedure and Record Keeping

After pretesting, all students attend a reading lab orientation at the Reading and Study Skills Center. The instructor demonstrates lab operation and how students should approach their individualized reading programs.

The Center is open from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M., Monday through Friday and 6 P.M. to 8 P.M., Monday through Thursday. The felxible hours accommodate diverse student schedules. The Center is supervised by the instructor or student supervisors.

The Center seats up to twenty-seven students in individual carrels. An adjoining room equipped with tables and chairs serves as the seminar room.

Each student receives a folder which houses test scores; reading progress records, charts, and graphs; student work; and evaluations. Students log each visit on a personal attendance sheet and on a master log sheet. When students sign out, the instructor initials the sheets to verify exit time. All student work is performed within the Center and folders are filed upon completion.

Descriptive Model

The Reading Progress Record is the basic record keeping unit. It has space for the results of three exercises; exercise answers are written on the back of the sheet. When three exercises are graded, the results are averaged and the Reading Efficiency Index (average rate x average comprehension) is computed. Scores are summarized on a Reading Progress Chart and Graph.

Evaluation Procedures

Students enrolled in Increasing Reading Effectiveness must log the expected amount of lab hours per quarter and take the Nelson-Denny posttest to determine a Pass/No Pass grade. Student pretest and posttest reading rate and total reading scores are recorded and compared on a quarterly review form for summary purposes.

Students enrolled in Improving Reading and Study Skills receive a letter grade based on the following point system:

Midterm	100 pts.
Assignments	60 pts.
Attendance	45 pts.
Reading Lab	95 pts.
Final	100 pts.
	400 pts.

A = 370-400 pts. (92.5-100%)

B = 340-369 pts. (85-92%)

C = 310-339 pts. (77.5-84%)

D = 280-309 pts. (70-77%)

Table 1 shows the summary of student results over six consecutive quarters in Increasing Reading Effectiveness.

Table 1 here

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Table 1

Summary of Student Results

Increasing Reading Effectiveness

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
Fall 1982	57	11.9	12.8	+.9	193	307	+114
Winter 1983	61	13.0	13.5	+.5	209	292	+ 83
Spring 1983	43	12.1	12.7	+.6	218	280	+ 62
Fall 1983	78	11.5	12.6	+1.1	201	279	+ 78
Winter 1984	36	11.6	12.3	+.7	206	276	+ 70
Spring 1984	31	11.4	12.1	+.7	209	245	+ 36

a. Quarter

b. Registered students

c. Average entry grade level equivalent

d. Average exit grade level equivalent

e. Average gain in years and months

f. Average entry WPM

g. Average exit WPM

h. Average rate gain